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MBK-0007

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS

4 March 1981

THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group

SUBJECT : Monthly Report - Bangkok Bureau - February 1981

I. OPERATIONS

A. Editorial/Monitorial

1. Highlighting this month's substantive issues were: continuing tension along the Thai-Lao border with shooting incidents forcing closure of the border, only to be reopened unilaterally by the Thai Government later in the month; the interjection of the mercurial Sihanouk factor into the Cambodian "problem," much to the consternation of Hanoi, as an effort by China and ASEAN to find an alternate solution to the Khieu Samphan-led Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese-backed Heng Samrin regime; and the bubbling political caldron in Thailand where recent surfacing of inter-party disputes, touched off by hints of scandal in foreign oil purchases and fueled by government indecision and inherent instability, have generated rumors of an imminent change in government either peacefully or through another military coup.

2. Although Bureau wirefiled publishable wordage for the month of February dropped significantly compared to January, the Nonaligned Conference of Foreign Ministers in New Delhi, combined with continued civil unrest on the subcontinent, produced sufficient verbal pyrotechnics to boost South Asian Unit wordage to 61,000, some 20,000 over the January total.

3. In addition to the heavy workload, the South Asian Unit was reduced by one on 21 February with the approved medical disability retirement of veteran monitor [redacted] (see Personnel). To balance coverage requirements with staffing, the Bureau was forced to propose some rather significant coverage adjustments to FCS and Gulf Bureau. Following coordination, two Moscow and one Beijing Urdu casts were transferred to Gulf for program summary preparation. Gulf

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will also assume backstop coverage of two late-night Karachi Urdu/English casts and process on ad hoc basis upon Bureau request. Until the Bureau can hire and train a new Indian monitor, the editors and Burmese monitors will participate regularly in South Asian English press and voice coverage.

4. Resuscitating momentarily the critically ill Headquarters feedback program with the field, DRD surprised the Bureau with a critique of the filed report by Lao Premier Kaysone Phomvihan to the plenary session of the Supreme People's Council. In a vigorous and quick response, Bureau editors produced irrefutable evidence that most of the "numerous headaches" admitted to by the DRD were in fact self-inflicted by an excessively large overdose of overediting. In a subsequent exchange of message, the DRD sued for peace, unconditionally. The Bureau hopes that the agony of defeat in this one battle will not deter DRD from pursuing the very important campaign of quality control.

VERY CUTE, BUT
NOT NECESSARILY TRUE

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II. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

1. The long awaited day when the Bureau reached full strength in its Cambodian section occurred on 22 February with the EOD [] the Bureau's fourth Cambodian monitor. [] a TCN Australian national who also has French and Thai, is the first bureau employee hired under the new worldwide FSN classification system. A thorough training program was worked up by unit supervisor [] in collaboration with Cambodian Section supervisor [] and senior editor []

2. Bureau editor [] to replace editor [] will be trained by senior editor []

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3. Word was received in mid-month that the medical disability retirement request [] had been approved by OPM. Per instructions, [] last day of work was 21 February, at which time he went on extended sick leave pending the official retirement date. [] and his wife will be staying in Bangkok until early May, at which time they will take up permanent residence in Hawaii.

4. A Bureau luncheon was held at nearby Neil's Tavern on the 25th in honor of new employee [] and departing employees []. Some 40 Bureau employees attended.

III. VISITS

A. To Bureau

1. AG Indochina analyst [] visited the bureau 17 February while on a private visit to Thailand.
2. [] contract editor, also stopped by the bureau on the 27th while on a visit to Thailand with her husband.

B. From Bureau

1. On 27 February, the bureau chief, deputy chief, and bureau engineer visited the VOA Bangkok office to inspect the premises and to chat with VOA personnel. The machine receiving the FBIS lateral file is now encased in a separate cabinet and is located in an "official entry only" office in VOA, an arrangement that restricts access to our file only to VOA management. FBIS service to VOA highlighted the frank and informative exchange with the VOA manager. Although VOA correspondent Steve Thompson was out of the country, he was invited to visit the Bureau at a future date.

IV. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Principally organized by Bureau employees, the 1st Annual [] Memorial Golf Tournament was held at Bang Phra, Thailand on 16 February. Nine bureau employees joined 18 other Mission employees for the all-day outing. Although the FBIS contingent walked away with most of the prizes, the tournament's namesake had to settle for suds and sarcasm on the bus trip home.

[]
Chief // Bangkok Bureau, FBIS

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Attachments:

Engineering

Production Report

Production Report by Language, Country & Source

Embassy Circuit Outage Report

Distribution:

C/Okinawa Bureau

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